



# Refugee Education: The Crossroads of Globalization

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## **Refugee Education: The Crossroads of Globalization**

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## **Refugee Education: The Crossroads of Globalization**

### **Abstract**

In this article, I probe a question at the core of comparative education – how to realize the right to education for all and ensure opportunities to use that education for future participation in society. I do so through examination of refugee education from World War II to the present, including analysis of an original dataset of documents (n=214) and semi-structured interviews (n=208). The data illuminate how refugee children are caught between the global promise of universal human rights, the definition of citizenship rights within nation-states, and the realization of these sets of rights in everyday practices. Conceptually, I demonstrate the misalignment between normative aspirations, codes and doctrines, and mechanisms of enforcement within nation-states, which curtail refugees' abilities to activate their rights to education, to work, and to participate in society.

### **Keywords**

refugees, citizenship, globalization, migration, comparative education

## **Refugee Education: The Crossroads of Globalization**

Annette lived in a refugee camp in southwest Uganda. In 2002, she had recently fled war in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). “Education will lead me to my dreams for the future,” she said, and despite on-going fighting in the camp and not enough to eat, she went to school every day. Like most refugees, Annette hoped, and truly believed, that she would soon return to her home country. That was until the day her father planted bananas, a long-to-mature crop. Annette knew then that she would be in Uganda for a long time, so she set about planting her future: she wanted to be a nurse.

In Uganda, Annette’s education was funded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a multilateral institution based in Geneva. This education was within the national system, which meant she had access to the same education as a Ugandan citizen. She followed the Ugandan curriculum, in English, and at the end of primary school she would sit for the national exam and get her certification. Each day, she stood in front of the Ugandan flag in her school’s compound singing the national anthem: “Oh, Uganda! . . . We lay our future in thy hand.” Annette laid her future in the hands of the nation-state, and yet – she came to realize – her future would not be *of* the nation-state. She could continue to go to school every day, but she would not be able to vote, she would not be able to own property, and, since she would not have the right to work, she would not be able to practice as a nurse. Five years later, Annette still lived in the

same refugee camp and was not in school; she was a subsistence farmer who tended, among other crops, her family's bananas (see Author, 2011, 2015).

Annette's experience in Uganda is one example of what I argue are remarkably similar situations of refugee children globally: caught between the global promise of universal human rights, the definition of citizenship rights within nation-states, and the realization of these sets of rights in everyday practices. In this article, I demonstrate the ways in which refugee education sits at the nexus of these tensions, illuminating the tug of war between globalization processes and persistently national institutions, especially in the domain of education. The analysis probes questions at the core of comparative education – how to realize the right to education for all and ensure opportunities to use that education for future participation in society. I situate these questions theoretically and empirically in the context of mass migration across nation-state borders.

To do so, I first bring together concepts that situate refugees vis-à-vis nation-states and use global institutionalism as a framework for understanding the mechanisms and institutions of rights activation, specifically the right to education. Second, I describe my historical and policy analysis research design and methodology, including analysis of an original dataset of documents from 1951 to the present (n=214) and semi-structured interviews (n=208). Third, I present findings, tracing important changes in underlying theories related to the purposes and provision of refugee education from World War II to the present and

highlighting changing relationships between UNHCR and nation-states as they negotiate responsibility for the education of refugees.

This examination of refugee education is substantively urgent. The number of refugees globally is at its highest level since World War II. In 2015 alone, 1.8 million people were newly displaced to become refugees, fleeing primarily from Syria, but also from Iraq, Mali, and South Sudan; they joined almost 17 million others who have remained refugees for multiple decades, from on-going conflicts in Afghanistan, DRC, and Somalia, for example (UNHCR, 2016a, p. 2). Education is important to the life chances of individual refugees, like Annette, to the present stability of the nation-states in which they find exile, to the future reconstruction of the conflict-affected societies from which they fled, and to the economic and political security of an interconnected world polity (see, for example, Collier, 2007; Davies, 2004). This article provides a framework to understand and address refugee education in the context of exclusions of non-citizens within nation-states.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### *Refugees and Their Positions within Nation-States*

Refugees are defined as people who have crossed an international border due to well-founded fear of persecution (UNHCR, 2010a).<sup>1</sup> UNHCR is the organization mandated with the physical, political, and social protection of refugees; with the

delivery of humanitarian assistance such as food, shelter, and water; and also with the provision of education<sup>2</sup>. As a constituent body, UNHCR's work on education, as on other issues, is coordinated with the governments of 'host countries,' as the states in which refugees reside are called.

Eighty-six percent of the world's refugees live in host countries that neighbor their conflict-affected countries of origin (UNHCR, 2014a), what I call here "neighboring host countries." For example, as of mid-2016, more than 1.5 million primarily Afghan refugees lived in Pakistan and almost one million in Iran; 2.7 million primarily Syrian refugees lived in Turkey and one million in Lebanon; and almost 0.4 million primarily Somali refugees lived in Kenya and 250,000 in Ethiopia (UNHCR, 2016a, and see [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) for constantly updated figures). These are, primarily, countries characterized by already overstretched education systems and fragile political and economic institutions. In contrast, less than one percent of refugees globally settle in countries with high Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, usually geographically distant from the country of origin, a process called "resettlement" (UNHCR, 2014b); here, I call these nation-states "distant resettlement countries." In 2014, the United States was the top resettlement country, with a total of 267,000 refugees (UNHCR, 2015); Canada hosted 149,000 refugees (UNHCR, 2015). In the same year, countries in Europe were in this category as well. Germany, for example, hosted 217,000 refugees and Greece 7,300 (UNHCR, 2015).

Education for refugees in distant resettlement countries is different than refugee education in neighboring host countries for two reasons: first, the numbers of refugees are relatively small; and, second, permanence – in terms of settlement and citizenship – is assumed, both by government and refugees. When individual refugees are resettled to or granted refugee status in the United States or Canada, for example, they are given a pathway to citizenship unavailable to the vast majority of refugees globally (see, for example, Nunn, McMichael, Gifford, & Correa-Velez, 2015).<sup>3</sup> While the education of resettled refugees to countries like the United States and Canada is a critical area of investigation, it is not the focus of this article.

Increased migration to Europe means that countries such as Germany, Sweden, and Greece do not fit neatly into a “neighboring host country” / “distant resettlement country” dichotomy. Unlike in distant resettlement countries, the numbers of individuals fleeing to European nation-states are not small: in 2015 alone, the German government reported 467,649 formal asylum applications, with many more as yet unregistered asylum-seekers (Germany Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2016); in the same year, almost one million asylum-seekers arrived in Greece, by sea routes alone (UNHCR, 2016b). Importantly, few of these asylum-seekers have been granted refugee status, placing them in similar limbo vis-à-vis permanent residence and possible citizenship to those in neighboring host countries. In this way, the citizenship status of individuals fleeing current



conflicts and arriving in European countries is similar to that in neighboring host countries, yet in a context of the educational resources of distant resettlement countries.

This article focuses on the 86% of refugees who live and access education in neighboring host countries, yet with implications for other nation-states hosting increasing populations of asylum-seekers with uncertain citizenship status. While most refugees flee their countries of origin with the intention of returning home rapidly, the average duration of exile for refugees is 17 years (IDMC, 2014). Despite the protracted nature of exile and uncertainty of return to a country of origin, refugees are almost always without any possible pathway to citizenship in neighboring host countries. In fact, the naturalization of long-staying Burundian refugees in Tanzania in 2014 is the only recent example (Hovil, 2016, p. 51).

Further, refugees are unable to realize many of the individual legal rights that characterize modern nation-states. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its companion 1967 Protocol provide international norms defining who is a refugee, refugee rights, and the legal obligations of the state vis-à-vis refugees, including related to education. Article 22 of the 1951 Convention specifies that signatory states “shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education... [and] treatment as favourable as possible... with respect to education other than elementary education” (UNHCR, 2010b). While 144 nation-states are party to the 1951

Convention and 146 to the 1967 Protocol, there are notable exceptions, including states where large numbers of people seek asylum: India, Lebanon, and Malaysia, for example. In these states, the rights of refugees are not bound by international conventions. In addition, some states have ratified only portions of the international instruments. Egypt, for example, does not endorse Article 22 of the 1951 Convention, noting “reservations because these articles consider the refugee as equal to the national” (UNHCR, 2011).

Education is one of a set of human rights, conceptualized as rules for normative behavior and enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, among other instruments. In theory, this postnational conceptualization legitimates the rights of individuals – in this case the right to education – beyond a particular nation-state or set of institutions (Goodale, 2007). Yet, the implementation of these rights generally continues to be the domain of the nation-state.

In the post-World War II period, Soysal adopted an optimistic view of the reconciliation of universal human rights in nation-state contexts (1994, p. 142). This article, however, explores the contemporary tension between the global promise of these rights and their limited realization within nation-states, particularly in settings of immensely constrained resources such as in neighboring host countries. Education is a case in point. Despite international conventions, the realization of refugees’ right to education varies globally. In 2014, 50% of

refugees had access to primary school, compared with 93% of all children globally; at the secondary level, 25% of refugees had access to education whereas 62% did globally. Within a given national context, refugees also usually access education at lower rates: in Pakistan, 43% of refugees access primary education compared to 72% of nationals; 5% of refugees access secondary education compared to 38% of nationals (Dryden-Peterson, 2015, pp. 9-10). “Treatment as favourable as possible,” as stated in Article 22 of the Refugee Convention, is variable between host countries, and the right to education for refugees is dependent on the laws, policies, and practices in place in each national context.

This tension between global rights and local implementation is both the genesis and on-going preoccupation of global institutions, including in education. As Somers and Roberts argue, rights are multifaceted and exist at “multiple registers,” which they define as normative aspirations; codification and doctrines; and the mechanisms and institutions of enforcement (2008, p. 388). Normative aspirations exist within the level of the individual, such as Annette, and within institutions, such as within UNHCR, through its mandate to protect refugees. The register of codification and doctrine is also evident in refugee education, through global Conventions and national laws and policies. I turn now to global institutionalism as a framework for understanding the mechanisms and institutions of enforcement, before bringing together the multiple registers through empirical analysis.

*Global Institutionalization and Refugee Education*

I focus on two critical dimensions of globalization<sup>4</sup> that are important to education and to this study of refugee education. First is the nature and degree of influence of globalized actors on education systems. Second are dilemmas, intensified with increasing migration, about who belongs within a nation-state. Both of these dimensions engage with the broader question of the role of the nation-state in education. By education, I mean the components of educational governance, including funding, provision, ownership, and regulation (Robertson & Dale, 2008, p. 6) as well as the experiences of teaching and learning in schools.

Prior to World War II, nation-states were the primary sites of policy-making in education, with local communities and educators themselves having a great deal of autonomy over policies and practices in their schools (Samoff, 2007; Weber, 2007). Subsequent Cold War politics led to the rise of extra-territorial influence in education, with many nation-states engaging in a decentralized “smorgasbord” of bilateral aid to education, which could conform directly to the interests of donor states (Mundy, 2006; 2007, p. 346). The rise of the Education for All (EFA) movement, leading up to the first World Conference on EFA in 1990, was a departure from what Mundy described as a “fractious epistemic community [that] allowed for a very loose coupling between rhetorical commitments and practical activities” (2006, p. 28). Post-1990 multilateralism, on

the other hand, represented growing consensus among nation-states about educational priorities and targets and an “unprecedented” commitment to coordination among actors to achieve these goals (Mundy, 2006, pp. 29, 35; Mundy & Murphy, 2001). The implications for nation-states, especially those that were aid recipients, were immense. Dale described the increasingly “globally structured agenda for education,” as involving the “ceding of some of individual states’ powers to supranational bodies,” bodies that became critical determinants of national education policy (2000, p. 441).

Multiple theoretical perspectives seek to explain how globalization influences national education systems, including world culture, world systems, postcolonial, and culturalist (Spring, 2008), with considerable debate over both the normative implications and empirical viability of each position (see, for example, Carney, Rapple, & Silova, 2012). Dale (1999) provides a productive framework for identifying the mechanisms and institutions by which global influences come to bear on national education systems, including through borrowing, learning, harmonization, dissemination, standardization, installing interdependence, and imposition (see also, Dale & Robertson, 2012). Important to this conceptualization is where the “locus of viability” (Dale, 1999) of the mechanism lies: external to a nation-state, internal to a nation-state, or somewhere in between. On one end of the spectrum, the “imposition” of policy in nation-states occurs through explicit and compulsory relationships with organizations

that hold power, such as World Bank education loans tied to structural adjustment (Summers & Pritchett, 1993) or education aid tied to security interests (Novelli, 2010). In the middle are a wide range of voluntary relationships for nation-states that come with less explicit external influences, such as membership in supranational organizations to which cohere certain principles, norms, and rules. The United Nations, for example, has facilitated growing convergence in education across nation-states, despite diversity in resources and histories (Meyer, Boli, Thomas, & Ramirez, 1997). On the other end of the spectrum are voluntary relationships with centers of power and decision-making within the nation-state, exemplified by policy borrowing or the movement of educational policies and practices across national borders (see, for example, Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012).

Steiner-Khamsi argues that policy reforms currently take on “international reference frames,” rather than bilateral ones, and that education policy more generally has been broadly deterritorialized (2012). Refugee education is under the mandate of a multilateral institution – UNHCR – and is related to populations that are, by definition, extra-territorial. We might thus expect refugee education to be at the forefront of these globalization developments.

However, as demonstrated in this article, refugee education is uniquely both internal and external to the nation-state. It is also situated differently vis-à-vis globalization and national education systems in different historical time

periods, which echoes the idea that international authority in education is “socially constructed and historically contingent” (Mundy, 2007, p. 340). Refugee education provides a case of how this authority is also deeply dependent on the relationship between the population to be educated and the nation-state. Across the multiple registers of normative aspirations, codification and doctrine, and mechanisms and institutions of enforcement, the crux of refugees’ relationship to nation-states relates to their status as non-citizens.

## **Methods**

In order to understand the tension between the global right to education for refugees and local implementation of this right, I employ methodologies of historical and policy analysis. My specific intent is to identify the purposes and modes of provision of refugee education since World War II, across the multiple registers of normative aspirations, codification and doctrine, and mechanisms and institutions of enforcement. This approach involves attending to the conceptions of key individual actors and of organizations both globally and in nation-states hosting refugees. It also involves attention to the timing, sequence, and interpretation of these conceptions and related actions and events (Amenta, 2009). To do so, the analysis draws on two unique and original datasets: archival documents and key informant interviews. First, I collected archival data at the Library and Archives of the United Nations Office of Geneva, the Archives of

UNHCR, and within the Education Unit at UNHCR. I gathered into one dataset education reports, strategies, policies, and internal documents from 1951 to the present (n=214). I included all documents related to education, with the intention of creating a comprehensive dataset. The documents are produced or commissioned by UNHCR and are oriented to the organizational perspective and to perspectives external to any one nation-state or, less frequently, comparative across nation-states.

The second data source are original, in-depth, and semi-structured interviews with key informants, including UNHCR staff and partners, such as Ministry of Education officials, NGO staff, other UN agency staff, refugee community leaders, and teachers of refugees. I conducted these interviews (n=86) during field-based data collection between October 2002 and April 2015 at UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland and, together with my students, in Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. We conducted additional interviews (n=122) virtually via phone and Skype between November 2010 and April 2015 with key informants in Bangladesh, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, and Yemen. These countries represented the largest populations of refugees globally at the time of data collection, which largely preceded the Syria conflict, and were identified by UNHCR as “priority countries.” We selected interview participants who worked broadly within registers external to the nation-state (e.g., UNHCR and UNICEF



Headquarters, bilateral donors) and within registers broadly internal to the nation-state (e.g., Ministries of Education, NGOs implementing education programs).

I designed the interviews to elicit understanding of specific dimensions of refugee education policy both past and present, including theories underlying decision-making at global, national, and community levels. Specifically, interviews focused on the processes of developing policies and strategies at the global level, as well as their adaptations in countries hosting refugees. In addition, I designed interview guides to understand the goals of refugee education held by relevant actors in each context and the ways in which decisions were made at nation-state levels about implementation of policies and strategies.

To analyze across the sources of data, I developed a coding system of *etic* codes that derived from theoretical understandings of refugees' positions within the nation-state and globalization in education (e.g., national laws/policies; relationship between UNHCR and Ministry of Education). I also used *emic* codes related to the purposes of refugee education and the structures of educational provision that emerged from documents and research participants (e.g., return to country of origin; integration to national education system; post-education opportunities). The examples presented in this article in the form of quotations or description are carefully chosen pieces of data that are representative of the broader dataset and intended to demonstrate trends.

## **Findings: Purposes and Provision of Refugee Education since World War II**

### *Phase 1 (1945-1985): Local Provision Meets New Global Institutions*

A coherent field of refugee education has origins in World War II and its aftermath. The needs of refugees were at the forefront of the work of the nascent United Nations, which took on educational responsibilities in the post-war European refugee crisis and then in emerging Cold War conflicts and Independence movements (Jones & Coleman, 2005). The nature of conflict changed at this time: not bounded by battlefields, conflicts were more dangerous for civilians and led to burgeoning refugee populations, including large numbers of children.

UNESCO was initially the global institution to hold the mandate for refugee education. However, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) quickly took on this responsibility as its decentralized structure (Ruggie, 2003) was well-suited to the local provision of education for refugees, who remained outside the purview of centralized planning for national education systems. UNHCR took on the mandate for refugee education in an *ad hoc* manner and then in a more formal way with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with UNESCO in 1967 (see UNESCO & UNHCR, 1984).

Through the 1960s and 1970s and until the mid-1980s, the role of these global institutions in the provision of refugee education was limited in scope, focused on post-primary education through scholarships for an elite few. The

decision to focus financial resources and staff in this way was intentional, targeted to what could not be provided locally within communities. For example, 1966 saw the launch of a post-secondary scholarship program with 1,000 scholarships; the number increased to 1,200 in 1982 and 3,950 in 1987 (UNHCR Inspection and Evaluation Service, 1997, p. 5).

Refugee communities organized themselves to create primary education opportunities where none existed (Dodds & Inquai, 1983; Sinclair, 2001), much as non-refugee communities did throughout the developing world at this time (see, for example, Moswela, 2007; Mwiria, 1990). Education for all was not yet a priority within any of the multiple registers of normative aspirations, codification and doctrine, and mechanisms and institutions of enforcement, and access to education remained limited.

These educational initiatives were local endeavors to an extent, but also connected to aspirations that spanned nation-states, often linked to refugees' struggles for self-determination. For example, Eritreans and Tigreans started schools in the 1970s in Sudan (Dodds & Inquai, 1983, p. 11), Nicaraguans in Honduras in the 1980s (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009), and South Africans in Tanzania in the 1980s (Serote, 1992, p. 49). In the words of anti-apartheid leader Oliver Tambo, these schools for refugees "consciously prepared our people to play a meaningful role in a liberated South Africa" (Tambo, 1991), a clear vision

for the connection of education in host countries to future participation in countries of origin.

Refugee education at this time was organized by communities and supported only in small ways by UNHCR. Yet, concurrently, refugee education had roots in transnational endeavors, as in the anti-apartheid movement, connecting across borders individuals and organizations, if not nation-states and global institutions. The purposes of refugee education spanned national borders and connected an exiled present to the future rebuilding of countries of origin.

*Phase 2 (1985-2011): Global Governance of Refugee Education*

This next phase of refugee education pivots toward a far greater role for codification, doctrines, and governance by global institutions. As a result, refugee education became distant from the present and future politics of the conflict-affected nation-states from which refugees had fled. In particular, 1985 marked a major shift toward a central role for UNHCR in articulating the purposes and mechanisms of provision of refugee education for adoption across all nation-state contexts in which refugees resided.

In this year, a review of refugee education programs concluded that UNHCR's approach of providing individual scholarships "requires a disproportionate share of resources for a small amount of refugees both in terms of staff time and project funds" (UNHCR, 1985). In response, UNHCR shifted

funding away from individual scholarships to support populations of refugee children, such that by 1986, 95% of UNHCR beneficiaries in education were primary school children (UNHCR, 1988).

UNHCR's shift in focus from developing an elite cadre of leaders through post-primary scholarships to providing access to education for all refugee children mirrored national trends in developing countries that focused on mass expansion of primary education and was driven by two main global developments within the register of codification and doctrine. First was the wide consensus on the right to education for all, institutionalization in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations, 1989, Article 28). Second was the related commitment to global action to achieve universal access to education, formalized in the EFA Declaration and incorporated centrally in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 1990 EFA Declaration recognized "war, occupation, [and] civil strife" as some of the "daunting problems" that "constrain efforts to meet basic learning needs" (World Conference on Education for All, 1990).

These normative shifts and formalization of commitments through conventions and declarations, as well as the economic globalization that accompanied the post-Cold War era marked the development of new forms of global authority in education. Refugee education, under the mandate of a UN agency, was outside of the structures of any nation-state. As such, refugee

education was not beholden to macroeconomic stabilization policies, yet it did follow the emerging pattern of global influences on the local provision of education. At the same time, nation-states were not impotent.

Unique to refugee education was its dual existence both dictated by the political and economic interests of the nation-state while outside of the nation-state structures of service provision. This was made possible through the advent of the refugee camp. This era included large refugee camps such as those for Vietnamese and Cambodians on the Thai border, Rwandans in eastern DRC, and Afghans in Pakistan, who lived distant from national populations and in circumscribed areas. This model was favored by UNHCR for reasons of efficiency of delivering services to large refugee populations and by host governments for reasons of security and allocation of financial responsibility for refugees to the global, not national, community (UNHCR, 2000; Verdirame & Harrell-Bond, 2005). The provision of education for refugees on a large scale and their location in isolated refugee camps led to the structural necessity of refugee children attending schools separate from nationals. UNHCR policies aligned refugee education as closely as possible to the country of origin, specifically in terms of curriculum and language, with the purpose of facilitating a swift return and enabling future participation in the country of origin (UNHCR, 2003).

The institutionalization of global influences on refugee education took the form of policies created in and implemented from UNHCR Headquarters in

Geneva. Waters and LeBlanc go so far as to suggest that UN agencies at this time acted as a “pseudo-state” for refugees (Waters & Leblanc, 2005). Between 1988 and 1995, there were four sets of global guidelines that provided detailed instructions for UNHCR staff members working in neighboring host country contexts (UNHCR, 1988, 1992, 1994, 1995). This proliferation of global policy was accompanied by the abolition of field-based education posts within UNHCR.

By the mid-1990s, refugee education entered a phase where it was led by policy and not people. This point is not meant to be a degeneration into what Smith calls “blob-ontology,” describing situations where organizations are viewed as agentic and people seem to be missing from the analysis (2005, p. 56).

However, refugee education policies of this time did take on the face of the organization, in large part because there were simply no people. Between 1998 and 2011, UNHCR did not have a single education officer working in a refugee-hosting country. In 2004, 0.1% of UNHCR’s total budget was allocated to education staff (Kelley, Sandison, & Lawry-White, 2004, p. 27). There was what one former Senior Education Officer described as a “total lack of expertise” in education within UNHCR.

In this context, UNHCR outsourced the provision of refugee education to “implementing partners,” national and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which were paid to deliver education to refugees in nation-state contexts. The mechanism of enforcement was excessive coherence in

codification and doctrine, but with clear focus on the issues that global policies could proscribe. For example, UNHCR measured quality of education at this time only by inputs: how many pupils per teacher and the percentage of trained teachers (where “trained” meant ten days of training).

A 1997 evaluation concluded that these education guidelines gave “limited guidance to managers, and allow[ed] for differences in interpretation of policies, determination of methods, and implementation” (UNHCR Inspection and Evaluation Service, 1997, p. 1). Interview participants suggested the guidelines were drafted this way quite on purpose, with the goal of creating enough latitude to allow for the continued existence of education programs in an environment of limited technical capacity. Yet policy could not fill the vacuum of limited educational expertise, and refugee education programs were “plagued by inconsistencies” (UNHCR Inspection and Evaluation Service, 1997, p. 1), such that in 2000, 25% of refugee children in Sudan had access to primary education while 98% did in Uganda (UNHCR Education Unit, 2002).

The underlying assumption of segregated education for refugees was a speedy return to a country of origin; but the reality of conflict was that displacement was protracted, an average of 17 years (IDMC, 2014). Prospects for educating refugees within host countries’ education systems, to create possibilities for future participation in the host society, were also limited. At this time, UNHCR had not one formal relationship with a national Ministry of Education in



a host country and, moreover, refugees' freedom of movement and the right to work were almost always limited. Educated through global authority of UNHCR, refugees were, ironically, isolated from other globalization processes, especially economic opportunities, globally or nationally. In a phrase echoed by top UNHCR staff members and refugee community members alike, refugee education was "education for ultimate disappointment."

*Phase 3 (2012-present): Global Support to National Systems*

The release of a new Global Education Strategy (GES) by UNHCR in 2012 enunciated a shift in the "locus of viability" (Dale, 1999) for refugee education from supranational, as observed in Phase 2, to national. In particular, the new UNHCR policy emphasized "integration of refugee learners within national systems" (UNHCR, 2012, p. 8). Interviews with UNHCR staff and other key informants revealed that the adoption of this approach stemmed from a number of factors. First, the geographic position of refugees within nation-states meant the provision of separate schooling was impractical; by 2012, more than half of refugees lived in urban areas and not in camps (UNHCR, 2009, p. 2; 2014c). Second, integration reflected the protracted nature of conflict and the growing realization that refugee children would likely spend their entire school-age years, if not more, in host countries. Third was the need to fund refugee education over extended and unknown time horizons, which was increasingly incompatible with

donor commitments. The integration of refugees within national systems emerged gradually, responding to these conditions in certain nation-state environments, such as for Annette as early as 2002 in Uganda, but was only formalized in UNHCR policy in 2012.

The 2012 policy precipitated rapid actual change. Interviews revealed that only 5 out of 14 nation-states with the largest populations of refugees globally at the time of data collection (identified by UNHCR as “priority countries”) integrated refugees to the national curriculum and language in 2010; by 2014, 11 of these 14 countries did so. By 2016, UNHCR had formal relationships on refugee education provision with national authorities (national Ministries of Education or Departments of Refugee Affairs) in 20 of its 25 expanded priority country operations, meaning negotiated access to national schools for refugees and established means of coordination. This was up from zero formal relationships in 2011.<sup>5</sup> In some cases, these formal relationships have translated into institutionalization of refugee education within the nation-state. For example, while historically refugees have been absent from national development plans and education sector plans, Cameroon, Niger, and Pakistan, for the first time included refugees in provincial and national planning documents by 2014 (Government of Balochistan Pakistan, 2013; Republic of Cameroon, 2013; République du Niger, 2013).

The 2012 Strategy also precipitated a re-population of education staff within UNHCR. Before the GES was launched in 2012, there were six UNHCR staff members working on education, three at headquarters in Geneva and three in field-based positions, which were created in 2011. Less than three years later, there were 44 dedicated education officers: 15 on the global team, working at headquarters and regionally; and 29 in field-based positions.

The overarching desired outcome of the GES – “access to quality education for refugees” (UNHCR, 2012, p. 8) – encompassed two central normative aspirations: the realization of the right to education and, through emphasis on quality, the idea that the education accessed would be of value. These dual priorities were articulated as global in nature. Yet interviews with UNHCR staff clarified what the text of the document pointed out: “[t]he Strategy provides a global framework for the development of more specific country-level education strategies and programmes” (UNHCR, 2012, p. 8). While the GES was global, the structures of provision of refugee education varied by nation-state. For example, in nation-states where refugees lived in camp settings, such as in Kenya, “integration to the national system” involved use of the curriculum and language of the host country even though refugee and national children did not attend school together. In nation-states in which refugees lived in urban areas, such as in Iran, “integration to the national system” involved use of the national curriculum and language as well as being physically together in school with citizens of the

host country; in some cases, such as in Lebanon, refugees and citizens used the same school buildings, in addition to curriculum and language, but were temporally segregated in separate shifts.

In each of these scenarios, refugee children were conceptualized, through normative aspirations and codified in policy doctrines, to be “integrated” within the education system of the nation-state. Yet interviews with field-based staff revealed that school experiences were frequently in conflict with this policy-level inclusion. The challenges were spatial, as in camps or separate shifts, but also curricular and relational, often connected to highly politicized tensions between refugees and citizens, such as in Kenya where political discourse reflected the idea that “refugees equal terrorists” or in Egypt where citizen children blamed refugee children for rising inflation. Importantly, despite integration in national education systems, in no nation-state did refugees, as of this writing, have the status that would enable the future economic, political, and social participation for which that education sought to prepare them.

## **Discussion**

This examination of the purposes and provision of refugee education from World War II to the present sheds light on a central and unresolved tension: refugees are both within and outside of nation-states. Haddad described this precarity as “the gaps *between* states” (2008, p. 7). On the one hand, refugee

education epitomizes global influences on education. It is steered by a multilateral institution – UNHCR – and dependent on extraterritorial financing by donors. On the other hand, the mechanisms and institutions of enforcement vis-à-vis refugee education are circumscribed by nation-states. Within the normative aspirations and the doctrines of the global Education for All movement, refugees are increasingly able to access their right to education, with the important caveat that universal access has yet to be achieved. However, refugees are also non-citizens and, without mechanisms and institutions of enforcement, continue to be unable to activate citizenship rights, including the right to work, that would enable them to make use of their education to participate in society.

Citizenship is not an end in itself but a means of realizing rights and creating spaces of legitimacy, access to resources, and belonging (see also Hovil, 2016, pp. 21-25). These rights include, but are not limited to, civil and political rights, such as the right to work, to own property, to vote, and to justice, all rights to which refugees do not have access in neighboring host countries. Integration of refugees within national education systems does provide a mechanism for refugees to access what Marshall (2009 [1950]) called “social citizenship,” in the form of access to a key social service. The recent widespread development of formal relationships between UNHCR and national Ministries of Education and the few cases of inclusion of refugees within national Education Sector Plans shift

the locus of viability of this social citizenship to within the nation-state and to its institutions of enforcement.

Less certain is whether this social citizenship can be realized without attention to cultural rights and group rights that address exclusion of ethnic and linguistic minorities (Banks, 2008, p. 130). Cultural citizenship, in the form of equality and recognition (Gutmann, 2003), may be activated in civic nation-states where national identity can represent “the amalgamation of many identities” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 157). There is often a gap, however, between this possibility and lived reality in schools, where ethnic and linguistic minority students experience discrimination and lack of belonging (see, for example, Abu El-Haj, 2007; Banks, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Recent research in neighboring host countries indeed demonstrated that refugees experienced marginalization similar to national ethnic and linguistic minorities (Dryden-Peterson, 2015; Mendenhall et al., 2015).

This marginalization that refugees experience similarly curtails possibilities of global citizenship as a means of realizing rights and creating spaces of legitimacy, access to resources, and belonging. On the one hand, cross-border living might provide to refugees possible opportunities of global citizenship, such as exposure to cosmopolitanism, global identities, and the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that could facilitate functioning in a global society. This view would follow a shift between schools as sites of the

promotion of *national* identity to schools as sites of the promotion of *global* identities, as within the broad movement of global citizenship education (see, among many, Haste, 2004; Nussbaum, 1994; Parker, Ninomiya, & Cogan, 1999; Ramirez & Meyer, 2012). In divided societies, where the concept of national citizenship “must be regarded as problematic and contested from the outset” (A. Smith, 2003, p. 24), globally-oriented citizenship holds promise for overcoming differences (Davies, 2006). Yet for marginalized and disenfranchised young people in Northern Ireland and Israel, teachers find that global citizenship is not viable given sociopolitical and geopolitical restrictions (Goren & Yemini, 2015; Reilly & Niens, 2014). The restrictions on refugees – non-citizens without civil and political rights – are further magnified, limiting the viability of global citizenship in this context.

The potential for education to contribute to the well-being of individual refugees, to their host countries, and to their conflict-affected countries of origin depends on the abilities of refugees to participate economically, politically, and socially. Thus the central question for the field of refugee education is how both to enable the universal right to education and to facilitate refugees’ ability to use that education within their host nation-states. This article demonstrates that refugee education policy historically has focused on the first of these endeavors, with both successes and on-going challenges. At present, refugee education policy begins to confront the issue of refugees’ participation, in focusing on the quality

of education and in promoting integration of refugees in national education systems.

Yet these policies exist within the registers of normative aspirations and doctrine, without mechanisms or institutions of enforcement. As Annette's experiences in Uganda underscore, these policies also exist within the constraints of refugees' positions within the nation-state. As non-citizens, refugees are without permanence or possible pathways to the rights that enable post-education work and civil and political participation. The lack of alignment between normative aspirations and doctrine external to the nation-state and mechanisms and institutions of enforcement within the nation-state presents a paradox for the refugee children and young people who seek education within these precarious spaces.

Future research is needed on the ideal and actual roles and partnerships of globalized actors such as UNHCR and national governments, specifically the ways in which they negotiate the age-old tension between the sovereignty of the nation-state and global responsibility. In so doing, the work would productively engage with previous research on the changing behavior of nation-states related to other issues of global concern, such as the banning of chemical weapons, the landmine treaty and, more recently, climate change. Mundy argues that non-state actors played important roles in these earlier changes, generating normative shifts in nation-state behavior in order to preserve legitimacy (Mundy, 2007, p. 342).



The enormity of the crisis in Syria, and the far-reaching impact of related violence, suffering, and migration, is an important moment to understand the viability of such normative shifts, with accompanying mechanisms of enforcement, related to refugee education both within global institutions and within nation-states.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, the term “refugee” describes any person with recognized refugee status in a host country. In most situations, an individual gains refugee status through a Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process to determine eligibility. In situations of mass movements of people from conflict or generalized violence, refugee status may be granted *prima facie*, meaning that it is applied at the group level to all people from a particular country who are fleeing with evident cause (e.g., to all Syrians fleeing to Jordan; to all Congolese fleeing to Uganda).

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) holds the mandate for the protection and provision of services for more than five million Palestinian refugees. The education of Palestinian refugees is a critical area of investigation and could provide important comparative insights into other sites of refugee education. For example, rates of access to education by Palestinian refugees are generally higher than for other refugee groups and UNRWA has engaged in long-term planning for education, despite similar overall funding constraints to UNHCR. Yet, the scope of this article cannot adequately address the distinct historical and organizational trajectories of UNHCR and UNRWA and, as such, education of Palestinian refugees is not included in this analysis.

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<sup>3</sup> In the United States, for example, resettled refugees have “conditional status” for one year before receiving permanent residency and eligibility for naturalization after five years.

<sup>4</sup> There continues to be substantial debate over the definition and measurement of globalization. I take as foundational Sassen’s conceptualization of globalization as including broad “denationalization,” while recognizing the continued importance of some institutions and relationships that adhere to the nation-state (Sassen, 2006). In practice, this means that political, economic, and social realities are no longer isolated within autonomous nation-states but instead involve complex interactions across nation-state boundaries (see also, Cerny, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> National governments with which UNHCR does not have a formal relationship at the time of this writing include Malaysia, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Burundi, and Djibouti.

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